

Statistical Brief

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Housing of Single-Parent Families

More families these days are headed by single parents. Between 1985 and 1989, the number of single parents who maintained their own household and had their own children under 18 years old living with them rose from 7.5 million to 8.6 million. They comprise about one-quarter of all family households with own children. Most single parents living with children are women.

This Brief focuses on single-parent families—in particular, their housing characteristics—and compares them to married-couple family households with their children present. The data come from the 1989 American Housing Survey (AHS). The AHS is sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

Nearly half of single parents are divorced.

Single parents who maintain their own household can be of any marital status, but can't have a spouse actually residing with them. Forty-three percent of these single parents were divorced; another 27 percent had never been married. Among Black single parents, however, it was

most common to never have been married: 45 percent.

Single parents are less educated.

Single-parent householders were less likely than married couples to have completed 4 years of college: 12 percent versus 28 percent. Similarly, 23 percent of single-parent householders had not completed high school, compared with 14 percent of married-couple householders.

Single parents aren't likely to own a home.

Single-parent householders were less than half as likely as married couples to own a home: 35 percent versus 74 percent. Regionally, single parents in the West had

the lowest homeownership rate: 30 percent. Among single parents who lived in metro areas, 23 percent living in central cities and 44 percent living in suburbs were homeowners.

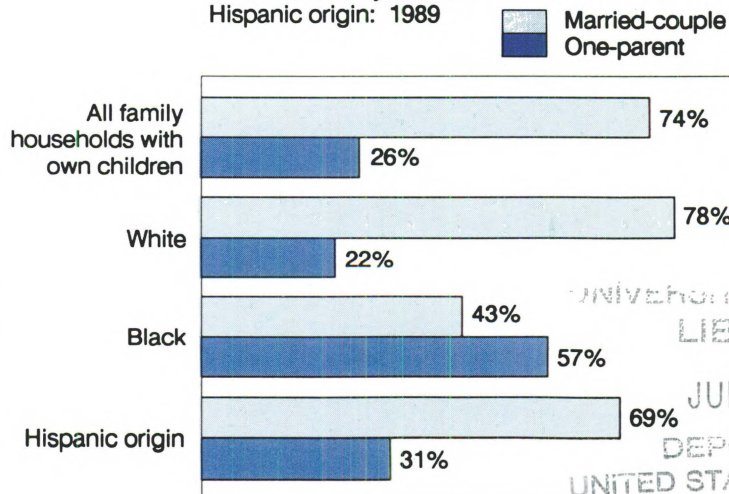
Single parents live in smaller homes.

Single-parent householders who owned single-family detached or mobile homes resided in homes with a median area of 1,646 square feet. Married-couple owners, on the other hand, lived in homes with a median area of 1,914 square feet.

Floor area size also differed among renters. Single-parent and married-couple family renters lived in units with median areas

Proportion of One-Parent Households Differs by Race, Ethnicity

Distribution of family households with own children, by race and Hispanic origin: 1989



Note: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.



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of 1,202 and 1,342 square feet, respectively.

Single parents have lower family incomes.

The median family income of households maintained by single-parent homeowners was about \$26,300, 42 percent less than that of married-couple owners (\$45,000). Among renters, single-parent households had a median family income of \$11,400, 56 percent less than that of married couples (\$25,800). Even single parents with related adults in their household who were potential wage earners had lower family incomes than comparable married-couple families. Such owners had a median income of \$34,700; renters had a median of \$16,900.

Single parents have lower housing costs, but spend a greater share of their income on housing.

Single-parent owners had median monthly housing costs of \$524, 18 percent less than what married-couple owners paid (\$640). Single parents did, however, spend a greater share of their family income on housing than did married couples (24 versus 19 percent).

Among renters, single parents and married couples paid \$388 and \$487, respectively, in median monthly housing costs. However, housing costs consumed 34 percent of single-parent renters' income, compared to 23 percent of married-couples' income.

Single parents are likelier to maintain low-income households.

According to the AHS poverty threshold, which is based on household rather than family income, 47 percent of single-parent renters and 14 percent of single-parent owners maintained low-

income households. The comparable figures for married couples were 17 percent and 4 percent, respectively.

Most single-parent subfamilies live with relatives.

There were 2 million single-parent subfamilies in 1989. Subfamilies are families that share a home with someone else who owns or rents it. Seventy-four percent of single-parent subfamilies shared a home with another family or individual they were related to. Of the related subfamilies, 41 percent lived in the home of a married couple; 50 percent lived in the home of a woman; while 9 percent lived in the home of a man. Women maintained 9 in 10 one-parent subfamilies.

More Information:

Housing Characteristics of One-Parent Households, Current Housing Reports, Series H121/92-2. Contact

Customer Services at the Census Bureau (301-763-4100) for ordering information.

Contacts:

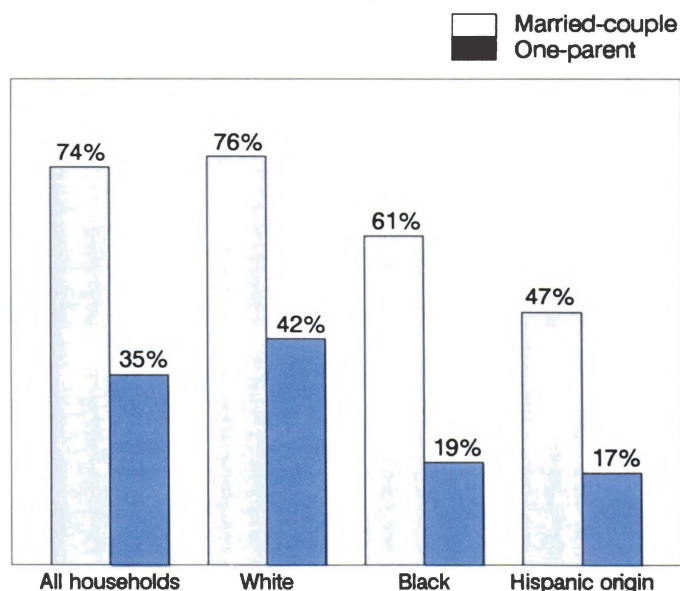
Housing of single parents — Timothy Grall 301-763-8120

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Single Parents Are Less Likely to Own a Home

Homeownership rates of family households with own children, by race and Hispanic origin: 1989



Note: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.